Numb. 11

The TATLER.

By *Iſaac Bickerſtaff* Eſq;

Quicquid agunt Homines noſtri Farrago Libelli.

From *Tueſday May* 3. to *Thurſday May* 5. 1709.

Will's Coffee-houſe, May 3.

A Kinſman has ſent me a Letter, wherein he informs me, He had lately reſolved to write an Heroick Poem; but by Buſineſs has been interrupted, and has done no more but made one Similitude, which he ſhould be afflicted to have wholly loſt, and begs of me to apply it to ſomething, being very deſirous to ſee it well plac'd in the World. I am ſo willing to help the Diſtreſs'd, that I have taken it in; but tho' his greater Genius might very well diſtinguiſh his Verſes from mine, I have mark'd where his begin. His Lines are a Deſcription of the Sun in Eclipſe, which I know nothing more like than a brave Man in Sorrow, who bears it as he ſhould do, without imploring the Pity of his Friends, or being dejected with the Contempt of his Enemies. As in the Caſe of *Cato*:

When all the Globe to *Ceſar*'s Fortune bow'd,
Cato alone his Empire diſallow'd;
With Inborn Strength alone oppos'd Mankind,
With Hear'n in View, to all below it blind:
Regardleſs of his Friends, Applauſe or Moan,
Alone triumphant, ſince he falls alone.

'Thus when the Ruler of the Genial Day,
'Behind ſome dark'ning Planet forms his Way,
'Deſponding Mortals, with officious Care,
'The Concave Drum, and Magick Braſs prepare;
'Implore him to ſuſtain th'important Fight,
'And ſave depending Worlds from endleſs Night.
'Fondly they hope their Labour may avail,
'To eaſe his Conflict, and aſſiſt his Toil.
'Whilſt he in Beams of native Splendor bright,
'(Tho' dark his Orb appear to humane Sight)
'Shines to the Gods with more diffuſive Light.
'To diſtant Stars with equal Glory burns,
'Inflames their Lamps, and feeds their Golden (Urns.
'Sure to retain his known ſuperior Tract,
'And proves the more illuſtrious by Defect.

This is a very lively Image; but I muſt take the Liberty to ſay, my Kinſman drives the Sun a little like *Phaeton*: He has all the Warmth of *Phœbus*, but won't ſtay for his Direction of it. *Avail* and *Toil*, *Defect* and *Tract*, will never do for Rhimes. But however, he has the true Spirit in him; for which Reaſon I was willing to entertain any Thing he pleas'd to ſend me. The Subject which he writes upon, naturally occaſions great Reflections into the Soul, and puts us in Mind of the mix'd Condition which we Mortals are to ſupport; which, as it varies to Good or Bad, adorns or defaces our Actions to the Beholders: All which Glory and Shame muſt end in what we ſo much repine at, Death. But Doctrines on this Occaſion, any other than that of living well, are the moſt inſignificant and moſt empty of all the Labours of Men. None but a Tragedian can die by Rule, and wait till he diſcovers a Plot, or ſays a fine Thing upon his *Exit*. In real Life, this is Chimæra; and by noble Spirits, it will be done decently, without the Oſtentation of it. We ſee Men of all Conditions and Characters go through it with equal Reſolution: And if we conſider the Speeches of the mighty Philoſophers, Heroes, Law-givers, and Great Captains, they can produce no more in a diſcerning Spirit, than Rules to make a Man a Fop on his Death-bed. Commend me to that natural Greatneſs of Soul, expreſs'd by an innocent, and conſequently reſolute, Country Fellow, who ſaid in the Pains of the Cholick, *If I once get this Breath out of my Body, you ſhall hang me before you put it in again.* Honeſt *Ned*! and ſo he dy'd.

But it is to be ſuppos'd, from this Place you may expect, an Account of ſuch a Thing as a New Play is not to be omitted. That of to Night is the neweſt that ever was writ. The Author is my Ingenious Friend Mr. *Thomas D——y*. This Drama is call'd, *The Modern Prophets*, and is a moſt unanſwerable Satyr againſt the late Spirit of Enthuſiaſm. The Writer had by long Experience obſerv'd, That in Company, very grave Diſcourſes have been follow'd by Bawdry; and therefore has turn'd the Humour that Way with great Succeſs, and taken from his Audience all Manner of Superſtition, by the Agitations of pretty Mrs. *Bicknel*, whom he has, with great Subtilty, made a Lay-Siſter, as well as a Prophetels; by which means, ſhe carries on the Affairs of both Worlds with great Succeſs. My Friend deſigns to go on with another Work againſt Winter, which he intends to call, *The Modern Poets*; a People no leſs miſtaken in their Opinions of being inſpir'd, than the other. In order to this, he has by him Seven Songs, beſides many Ambiguities, which cannot be miſtaken for any Thing but what he means 'em. Mr. *D——y* generally writes State-Plays, and is wonderfully uſeful to the World in ſuch Repreſentations. This Method is what was us'd by the old *Athenians*, to laugh out of Countenance, or promote Opinions among the People. My Friend has therefore, againſt this Play is acted for his own Benefit, made Two Dances, which may be alſo of an univerſal Benefit. In the Firſt, he has repreſented Abſolute Power, in the Perſon of a Tall Man with an Hat and Feather, who gives his Firſt Miniſter, who ſtands juſt before him, an huge Kick: The Miniſter gives the Kick to the next before; and ſo to the End of the Stage. In this Moral and Practical Jeſt, you are made to underſtand, That there is, in an Abſolute Government, no Gratification, but giving the Kick you receive from one above you, to one below you. This is perform'd to a grave and melancholy Air; but on a ſudden the Tune moves quicker, and the whole Company falls into a Circle, and take Hands; then, at a certain ſharp Note, they move round, and kick as kick can. This latter Performance he makes to be the Repreſentation of a Free State; where, if you all mind your Steps, you may go round and round very jollily, with a Motion pleaſant to your ſelves, and thoſe you dance with: Nay, if you put your ſelves out, at the worſt you only kick, and are kick'd, like Friends and Equals.

From my own Apartment, May 4.

Of all the Vanities under the Sun, I confeſs, that of being proud of one's Birth is the greateſt. At the ſame Time, ſince in this unreaſonable Age, by the Force of prevailing Cuſtom, Things in which Men have no Hand, are imputed to 'em; and that I am us'd by ſome People, as if *Iſaac Bickerſtaff*, tho' I write my ſelf *Eſquire*, was no Body: To let the World right in that Particular, I ſhall give you my Genealogy, as a Kinſman of ours has ſent it from the *Heralds Office*. It is certain, and obſerv'd by the wiſeſt Writers, That there are Women who are not nicely chaſt, and Men not ſeverely ho-

honeſt, in all Families; therefore let thoſe, who may be apt to raiſe Aſperſions upon ours, pleaſe to give us as impartial an Account of theirs, and we ſhall be ſatisfied. The Buſineſs of Heralds is a Matter of ſo great Nicety, that, to avoid Miſtakes, I ſhall give you my Couſin's Letter *verbatim*, without altering a Syllable.

Dear Couſin,

Since you have been pleas'd to make your ſelf ſo famous of late, by your ingenious Writings, and ſome Time ago by your learned Predictions: Since Partridge, *of Immortal Memory, is dead and gone, who, Poetical as he was, could not underſtand his own Poetry; and Philomathical as he was, could not read his own Deſtiny: Since the Pope, the King of* France, *and great Part of his Court, are either literally or metaphorically defunct: Since, I ſay, theſe Things, not foretold by any one but your ſelf, have come to paſs after ſo ſurprizing a Manner; 'tis with no ſmall Concern I ſee the Original of the* Staffian *Race ſo little known in the World as it is at this Time; for which Reaſon, as you have employ'd your Studies in Aſtronomy, and the Occult Sciences, ſo I, my Mother being a Welſh Woman, dedicated mine to Genealogy, particularly that of our own Family, which, for its Antiquity and Number, may challenge any in* Great-Britain. *The* Staffs *are originally of* Staffordſhire, *which took its Name from them: The Firſt that I find of the* Staffs *was one* Jacobſtaff, *a famous and renown'd Aſtronomer, who by* Dorothy *his Wife had Iſſue ſeven Sons*; viz. Bickerſtaff, Longſtaff, Wagſtaff, Quarterſtaff, Whitſtaff, Faithful, *and* Tipſtaff. *He had alſo a younger Brother, who was twice married, and had five Sons*; viz. Diſtaff, Pikeſtaff, Mopſtaff, Broomſtaff, *and* Raggedſtaff. *As for the Branch from whence you ſpring, I ſhall ſay very little of it, only that 'tis the Chief of the* Staffs, *and call'd* Bickerſtaff, quaſi Biggerſtaff; *as much as to ſay, the* Great Staff, *or,* Staff *of* Staffs; *and that it has apply'd it ſelf to Aſtronomy with great Succeſs, after the Example of our aforeſaid Forefather. The Deſcendants from* Longſtaff, *the ſecond Son, were a rakiſh diſorderly Sort of People, and rambled from one Place to another, ſtill in* Harry II.'s *Time they ſettled in* Kent, *and were call'd* Long-Tails, *from the* Long Tails *which were ſent 'em as a Puniſhment for the Murder of* Thomas a Becket, *as the Legends ſay. They have been always ſeek'd after by the Ladies; but whether it be to ſhow their Averſion to Popery, or their Love to Miracles, I can't ſay. The* Wagſtaffs *are a merry thoughtleſs Sort of People, who have always been opinionated of their own Wit; they have turn'd themſelves moſtly to Poetry. This is the moſt numerous Branch of our Family, and the pooreſt. The* Quarterſtaffs *are moſt of 'em Prize-fighters or Deer-ſtealers: There have been ſo many of 'em hang'd lately, that there are very few of that Branch of our Family left. The* Whitſtaffs *are all Courtiers, and have had very conſiderable Places: There have been ſome of 'em of that Strength and Dexterity, that Five hundred of the ableſt Men in the Kingdom have often tug'd in vain to pull a Staff out of their Hands. The* Faithſtaffs *are ſtrangely given to Whoring and Drinking: There are abundance of 'em in and about* London. *There's one Thing very remarkable of this Branch, and that is, there are juſt as many Women as Men in it. There was a wicked Stick of Wood of this Name in* Harry IV.'s *Time, one Sir* John Falſtaff. *As for* Tipſtaff, *the youngeſt Son, he was an honeſt Fellow; but his Sons, and his Sons Sons, have all of 'em been the veriеſt Rogues living: 'Tis this unlucky Branch has ſtock'd the Nation with that Swarms of Lawyers, Attorneys, Serjeants, and Bailiffs, with which the Nation is over-run.* Tipſtaff, *being a Seventh Son, us'd to cure the* King's-Evil; *but his raſcally Deſcendants are ſo far from having that healing Quality, that by a Touch upon the Shoulder, they give a Man ſuch an ill Habit of Body, that he can never come abroad afterwards. This is all I know of the Line of* Jacobſtaff: *His younger Brother* Iſaacſtaff, *as I told you before, had Five Sons, and was married twice; his Firſt Wife was a* Staff, *(for they did not ſtand upon falſe Heraldry in thoſe Days) by whom he had one Son, who in Proceſs of Time being a Schoolmaſter, and well read in the Greek, call'd himſelf* Diſtaff, *or* Twice-ſtaff: *He was not very rich, ſo he put his Children out to Trades; and the* Diſtaffs *have ever ſince been employ'd in the Woollen and Linen Manufactures, except my ſelf, who am a Genealogiſt.* Pikeſtaff, *the eldeſt Son, by the Second Venter, was a Man of Buſineſs, a downright plodding Fellow, and withal ſo plain, that he became a Proverb. Moſt of this Family are at preſent in the Army.* Raggedſtaff, *was an unlucky Boy, and us'd to tear his Clothes a getting Birds Neſts, and was always playing with a tame Bear his Father kept.* Mopſtaff *fell in Love with one of his Father's Maids, and us'd to help her to clean the Houſe.* Broomſtaff *was a Chimney-Sweeper. The* Mopſtaffs *and* Broomſtaffs *are naturally as civil People as ever went out of Doors; but alas! if they once get into ill Hands, they knock down all before 'em.* Pilgrimſtaff *run away from his Friends, and went a ſtrolling about the Country: And* Pipeſtaff *was a Wine-Cooper. Theſe Two were the unlawful Iſſue of* Longſtaff.

N. B. *The* Canes, *the* Clubs, *the* Cudgels, *the* Wands, *the* Devil upon Two Sticks, *and one* Bread, *that goes by the Name of* Staff of Life, *are none of our Relations. I am,* Dear Couſin,

Your humble Servant,

From the *Heralds-Office, May* 1. D. Diſtaff.

St. James's Coffee-houſe, May 4.

As Politick News is not the principal Subject on which we treat, we are ſo happy as to have no Occaſion for that Art of Cookery, which our Brother Newſmongers ſo much excel in; as appears by their excellent and inimitable Manner of dreſſing up a ſecond Time for your Taſt the ſame Diſh which they gave you the Day before, in caſe there came over no new Pickles from *Holland*. Therefore, when we have nothing to ſay to you from Courts or Camps, we hope ſtill to give you ſomewhat new and curious from our ſelves: The Women of our Houſe, upon Occaſion, being capable of carrying on the Buſineſs, according to the laudable Cuſtom of the Wives in *Holland*; but without further Preface, take what we have not mentioned in our former Relations.

Letters from *Hanover* of the 30th of the laſt Month ſay, That the Prince Royal of *Pruſſia* arriv'd there on the 15th, and left that Court on the 2d of this Month, in Purſuit of his Journey to *Flanders*, where he makes the enſuing Campaign. Thoſe Advices add, That the young Prince *Naſſau*, Hereditary Governor of *Friesland*, conſummated on the 26th of the laſt Month his Marriage with the Beautiful Princeſs of *Heſſe Caſſel*, with a Pomp and Magnificence ſuitable to their Age and Quality.

Letters from *Paris* ſay, his moſt Chriſtian Majeſty retir'd to *Marly* on the Firſt Inſtant, *N. S.* and our laſt Advices from *Spain* inform us, That the Prince of *Aſturias* made his publick Entry into *Madrid* in great Splendour. The Duke of *Anjou* has given Don *Joſeph Hartado de Amaraga* the Government of *Terra-Firma*, *de Veragua*, and the Preſidency of *Panama*, in *America*. They add, That the Army commanded by the Marquis *de Bay* hath been reinforc'd by Six Battalions of *Spaniſh* and *Walloon* Guards. Letters from *Lisbon* adviſe, That the Army of the King of *Portugal* was at *Elvas* on the 22d of the laſt Month, and was to decamp on the 24th, in order to march upon the Enemy, who lay at *Badajos*.

Yeſterday, at Four in the Morning, his Grace the Duke of *Marlborough* ſet out for *Margate*, and imbark'd for *Holland* at Eight this Morning.

Yeſterday alſo Sir *George Thorold* was declar'd Alderman of *Cordwainers* Ward, in the Room of his Brother Sir *Charles Thorold*, deceas'd.

Any Ladies, who have any particular Stories of their Acquaintance, which they are willing privately to make publick, may ſend 'em by the Penny-Poſt to Iſaac Bickerſtaff *Eſq; enclos'd, to Mr.* John Morphew *near* Stationers-Hall.

Sold by *John Morphew* near *Stationers-Hall*, where *Advertiſements* are taken in.